



**ACTIVISM
AGAINST
ABLEISM**

Methodology to promote the political participation of differently abled.

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The AAA - Activism Against Ableism Project

By assisting young European citizens with disabilities in becoming socially and politically active as well as by encouraging their participation and activism in relation to deficiency policies, this project seeks to raise public awareness of deficiency and challenge capacity by challenging social, cultural, and employment policies that support capacity.

This project's overarching objective is to create jointly created intervention techniques and tactics to support disabled citizens' political involvement. This will assist society in better understanding the relationship between personal experiences of exclusion and the socioeconomic circumstances that emerge because of the systems that both foster exclusion and can do so.

Young people with disabilities, youth workers who deal with them, and organisations that support young people with disabilities make up the project's target audience.

Overview of WP3 - Methodology to promote the political participation of differently abled.

This WP was created in stages, using inspiration from participatory action research methodologies, with the goal of creating an approach to encourage persons with disabilities to participate in society's democratic processes.

Each partner choose three members who were reasonably at ease speaking in English for the new international working group. The technique with the participants was completed with an emphasis on coming to an understanding regarding the prior suggested activities, strategies, and practises, which will later give rise to the Handbook and In-Service Training for Youth Workers.

The International Working Group (IWG)

One of the main objectives envisioned by the AAA-Project team is that by participation in this initiative, young people with disabilities were assisted in developing methods to encourage their participation in society as voters. Two young people with disabilities and one researcher from each partner country made up the international working group that was established to achieve these goals. This group's goal was to make sure that the project's target group members were at the core of the project's development process. Thus, the methodology to encourage differently abled young individuals to participate in politics was developed and directly validated by end users.



The AAA-Project methodology emphasises how crucial it is to include the target group in the development process through a participatory strategy to influence project outcomes and protect the quality and relevance of the products generated. Through the international working group, individuals of the project target group were included from the start, saving the project partners from having to make expensive revisions to outputs created later in the project or ignoring their requirements and experiences. Therefore, by creating the Methodology to encourage the political engagement of young people with disabilities (WP3), which will later give rise to the Handbook and In-Service Training for youth workers (WP4), this group assisted partners in addressing both previously acknowledged and unidentified needs.

Participants in this international working group (IWG) came from all the partner nations, and over the course of three meetings, they established a methodology. These meetings were coordinated and facilitated by researchers from each partner group, who also produced reports that were approved by everyone involved. The previous process of creating a European network and National ecosystems developed in WP2, which culminated with a Welcoming Event to involve these organisations and other institutions that work directly with differently abled citizens, assisted in the identification of members for this IWG. These participants encouraged the growth of the technique that was developed to aid youth workers and equip them to use it to encourage young people's political participation.

The IWG's Role in the AAA-Project

The creation of this international working group was essential to the success of the entire project since it allowed the target audience, young people with disabilities, to design and create the project results. On the one hand, it was anticipated that it would enable these individuals to participate more actively in society and politics. On the other hand, by putting people at the centre of the methodology's creation process, it attempted to ensure that the methodology developed answers to their requirements and expectations. The project's influence may also be increased by these participants becoming multipliers of the methodology, applying it with their networks informally or formally, leading to the formation of advocacy organisations or associations.

Members

The IWG included 14 young people with disabilities (two per partner), who were the project's main target population. There were 21 participants in all. Additionally, it included seven researchers— one for each partner—who helped the participants develop their methods. Except for the researchers,

who were employees of partner organisations, IWG group members were external to each partner organisation.

Participants were picked with care. They are people who possessed the knowledge and skills to make a significant contribution to the AAA project and were reasonably at ease speaking English were invited.

Individual participant identification

Choosing the participants for this IWG (active people with a disability) was the first stage in organising the group. It was crucial to consider our current contacts to accomplish this, including public and private, local, regional, and national organisations and other institutions that work directly with people with disabilities, as well as trainers, education policymakers, and specialists in pedagogic design for children with disabilities. Then we extend an invitation to those we believe could contribute more and offer the most insightful criticism on the creation of the AAA-Project approach.

We sought to involve young people with disabilities who were already activists and/or advocates in this area so they could contribute their experience and viewpoints to the methodology's development.

Mediators

During learning circles sessions, it was critical to have at least two mediators present: one to moderate the session, ensuring that all participants had an equal say and shared their opinions, while also asking questions and encouraging discussion; and the other to be attentive to nonverbal cues and thus introduce relevant questions or reflections that the other mediator may not have noticed. These two mediators had to operate as a team and coordinate their efforts prior to the meetings. On this occasion, the researchers represented the WP's leader and co-leader - Rightchallenge and Synthesis.

The five other researchers from the other five partners made notes and recorded each participant's responses. They were also the participants' first point of contact with the initiative; therefore, their presence was crucial. With the consent of all participants, the online meetings were recorded to verify the notes and aid in the creation of reports. All the mediators felt secure discussing the AAA-Project and responding to any participant queries.

Environment

When organising an IWG session, it's vital to keep in mind that participation is entirely voluntary and that attendees are contributing their knowledge and experience to further the goals of our consortium. We considered several factors when organising our IWG meetings (some of those factors applied to the online meetings and some to the LTTA).

General Instructions for Managing IWGs

Structure of the meetings

The project, its goals, and outcomes were presented at the **first meeting**, which took place online for three hours. This helped to create a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere. It also highlighted the purpose of the activity and sparked a wide-ranging discussion on the topic.

The **second meeting** (LTTA) was held in Cyprus and lasted for 18 hours over the course of three days. It facilitated the analysis and discussion of the report that had been created, focused the discussion on tactics for fostering activism and social and political participation, and used hands-on activities in small groups to create proposals for strategies, training programmes, and activities.

The **third meeting's** main goal was to achieve an understanding of the earlier suggested tasks, techniques, and practises through a three-hour online meeting. After the methodology was finalised, the IWG members met online for the last time to review the document and provide final input.

Methodology to promote the political participation of differently abled people.

The international working group's methodology is summarised in this final report of all meetings, with an emphasis on the suggested actions, tactics, and practises. Additionally, this methodology should have a greater impact because IWG participants will spread it throughout their networks through the creation of advocacy groups and alliances, which they can do formally or informally.

The methodology is structured under three main categories that were the focus of discussion in the LTTA: Education, Social Visibility, and Social Participation. Other topics that were briefly discussed will be mentioned as part of these three wider topics as well.

Education

To help youth workers prepare young people with disabilities for social and political participation, this section aims to provide guidelines and techniques surrounding ableism and education.

What is ableism?

First, the term ableism needs to be clearly explained and debated. Ableism refers to the discrimination, prejudice, and systemic oppression faced by differently-abled individuals based on their disabilities. It encompasses a range of negative attitudes, beliefs, and stereotypes that devalue and marginalise disabled people, perpetuating unequal power dynamics and hindering their full inclusion and participation in society. It needs to be addressed that ableism can manifest in various ways, including physical barriers, social exclusion, inaccessible environments, and unequal treatment in areas such as education, employment, healthcare, and housing. Here are some strategies to tackle the topic of ableism in respect to education:

- It is important for youth workers who interact with people with disabilities to identify that children are our future advocates and allies in creating a more inclusive and equitable society. Introducing education on activism against ableism at a young age helps foster empathy, understanding, and acceptance of individuals with disabilities. Education for activism against ableism is a powerful tool in challenging societal norms, dismantling discrimination, and promoting inclusivity for individuals with disabilities. By raising awareness, fostering empathy, and empowering individuals, we can work towards creating a society that values diversity, equal rights, and accessibility for all.
- A critical attitude towards ableism should be developed by those who utilise this methodology, and this entails acknowledging its existence, comprehending its effects, and trying to end it. It is critical to acknowledge ableism. Accepting that this prejudice exists and penetrates many elements of society, including attitudes, laws, and rituals, is important. It is crucial to dispel the notion that disability is a flaw or a situation that requires fixing. Then, both persons with disabilities and people without disabilities should be exposed to all these thoughts and ideas. This could be accomplished by organising campaigns in schools to promote inclusive teaching methods that meet the various learning requirements of students with disabilities. This entails making appropriate modifications, creating a positive learning environment, and encouraging teamwork and respect among all pupils.

- Educating people about ableism improves their knowledge of it. Unquestionably, extensive training can ensure that the most disadvantaged persons have access to educational opportunities and may engage fully in their communities while also helping to prevent prejudice and mistreatment. Stereotypes, ideas, and misconceptions about individuals with disabilities should be dispelled by both those who deal with disabled youth and those who are handicapped themselves. Common misconceptions about impairments should be dispelled, and young people should be urged to do so. Using examples, tales, or making and displaying hilarious movies to demonstrate the distinctive talents, capabilities, and accomplishments of persons with disabilities is a useful way to accomplish this.
- In the realm of education, youth workers and educators could develop, alongside people with disabilities, infographics with statistical data on the number of disabled people in Europe and in partner countries, types of disability and non-visible disabilities and focus on issues of human rights violations of disabled people, such as the right to reproduction and not sterilization of disabled people, domestic violence, and sexual abuse of disabled people.
- Advocacy in Educational Systems is a crucial tactic to employ. At all educational levels, it is critical to promote inclusive education practises, accessibility modifications, and resources for students with disabilities. Additionally, youth workers who work with individuals with disabilities must bring up the topic of the flawed educational system because it now divides those with and without impairments, preventing those with disabilities from choosing their own educational path.

Promoting political knowledge of youth with disabilities

Promoting political knowledge among youth with disabilities is an essential aspect of empowering young people with disabilities to participate fully in the democratic process. Here are some strategies to enhance their political knowledge:

- The use of simplified materials. The creation of materials that are clear and concise is important since the various political procedures and structures can be explained through them. For young persons with cognitive disabilities, the information should be made accessible by using simple language, visual aids, and audio formats. The strategy of creating videos with information about the functioning of the EU as well as to make a web quest for young people to focus on their own country are strategies that could be of great significance.

- Training of young people is also quite important. Inclusive workshops could prove a good method for promoting political knowledge. The creation of sessions geared on educating young people with disabilities about the functions of regional, national, and European governments as well as the legislative and decision-making processes is a strategy that could be followed. Interactive Learning is a learning method that will contribute to achieving this. Include role-playing games, case studies, and interactive activities to keep participants interested and improve their comprehension of political systems.
- The creation of youth forums and organizations is also a guideline that youth workers could develop alongside people with disabilities. Establish youth-led forums and organizations that focus on political engagement, advocacy, and leadership development for youth with disabilities.

Social Visibility

The goal of this section is to give advice and tactics on ableism and social visibility that youth workers may utilise to get young people with disabilities ready for participation.

It is important to first define what social visibility means. A variety of theoretical issues surrounding social visibility for people with disabilities and ableism need to be examined and argued. Social visibility is the recognition of individuals with disabilities as contributing members of society. It involves challenging stereotypes, promoting positive representations, and ensuring that people with disabilities are included in all aspects of social and cultural life.

Social visibility aims to dismantle the stigma and invisibility associated with disabilities. Disabled people are often underrepresented. People with different abilities would like to witness their experiences but feel misunderstood and end up close in their niche.

Human Rights

Promoting human rights and combating ableism requires a comprehensive approach that addresses both systemic and individual levels. Here are some strategies for promoting human rights and addressing ableism:

- Social visibility is interrelated with the aspect of accessibility. Therefore, the creation of both physical and digital accessibility should be a priority. Physical Accessibility: To ensure that

people with disabilities have equitable access to mobility in public areas, advocate for accessible infrastructure, buildings, transit, and buildings. Digital accessibility: Promote the creation and deployment of digital accessibility guidelines to guarantee that technology, software, and websites are usable by people with disabilities.

- The discussion regarding intersectionality is important, since it recognises that individuals experience multiple intersecting forms of oppression and discrimination, such as sexism, racism, and classism. People with disabilities who also belong to marginalised groups may face compounded barriers and unique challenges. Therefore, there needs to be a promotion or public lectures to gain awareness of all kinds of disabilities, including non-visible disabilities, and problems that people with disabilities can have and raising awareness in the public.
- People who work with people with disabilities should introduce key concepts related to ableism, such as inclusion, empathy, stereotypes, and accessibility, within the context of social visibility in different events that can be organised at a local or national level. To achieve this, workers alongside people with disabilities can provide explanations, examples, and interactive moments to help people grasp the concepts and relate them to real-life situations.
- In this context, youth workers in collaboration with young people with disabilities could work on the creation of an audiobook that will also include a game. The book will be for children from kindergarten to primary school with accessible language and a kind of easy-to-read book to be simple and accessible to any person with any kind of disability. The book should approach the topics of social inclusion, discrimination, and violence and deconstruct concepts and misconceptions regarding people with disabilities. Then the book can be disseminated to schools to reach as many kids as possible and have a higher impact.
- It might prove important to find someone with a disability in a high-profile position, that could make an awareness-raising video to post in social media and YouTube channels to create awareness for the issue of social visibility. These people could be from high-profile organisations that work with people with disabilities or people that have the political or social power to influence the public. If it is difficult to find a high-profile person, this activity can still be run by volunteers who want to create testimonials or videos discussing these issues.

These tactics need to be modified for the cultural, social, and legal environments in which they are used. The views and leadership of people with disabilities must be actively included and given

priority in the planning and execution of activities aimed at advancing human rights and combatting ableism.

Social Inclusion

Social visibility is closely related to the concept of social inclusion. Social inclusion is a key aspect of combating ableism and promoting equality for individuals with disabilities. Here are some strategies to achieve this:

- Through the required adaptations and support, this method seeks to advance laws and practises that make it easier for kids with disabilities to be fully included in conventional classes. This can be initiated by the youth workers and organisations who deal with disabilities by providing useful information to other organisations not focused on disabilities about the needs and requirements of people with disabilities.
- Provide educators with training on inclusive teaching methods, accessibility, and helping students with a range of learning needs. Teach children the importance of inclusive behaviour and kindness towards everyone. Discuss ways to be inclusive, such as including everyone in games, helping when needed, and being respectful and supportive of others' differences. Organize debates specifically focused on disability rights, inclusion, and ableism. Topics could include accessibility, inclusive education, employment opportunities, or the portrayal of disability in media. These debates can take place in a school, work, or any informal environment.
- The right to work is an important topic when discussing social inclusion of people with disabilities. In this respect youth workers and people with disabilities could collaborate with high profile companies or organizations to make sure that people with disabilities are not denied the opportunity to find employment because of their condition. Make sure offices are modified to meet the requirements of those with disabilities so they can work in specific places as well. People who are first line workers and people with disability can aid large- or small-scale companies to identify the needs and modifications that need to be considered.
- Share personal stories and narratives of individuals with disabilities to raise awareness and create empathy among the broader society. Plan public discussions on issues relating to disabilities and ask people with disabilities to take part as speakers, moderators, or audience members. Host panels where people with disabilities can speak about their own perspectives, knowledge, and expertise about disability rights and social inclusion.

- Accessible Spaces and Infrastructure: Advocate for the creation of accessible public spaces, buildings, transportation systems, and digital platforms to ensure inclusivity and equal participation for all. This can be debated first at a local level, and then at a national level.
- Use or create videos from the Independent Living Movements chairmen with statements about their fight. It is also useful to investigate the countries that have Independent Living Movements and contact them to make a statement about their fight, aims and objectives. The chairman of this movement is differently-abled, which would also positively contribute to the fight. Not all countries have this movement, however the countries that have this movement could make this contact, and the others could try at a European level. However, looking for people at this level might not be easy. Therefore, we could also ask workers who work with people with disabilities to lend their testimony and make videos of both the disabled people who personally experience the 'discomfort' of social visibility and the workers to have a view from the outside.

Social Participation

To help youth workers prepare young people with disabilities for various activities and methods related to this topic, the following section will offer guidelines and techniques surrounding ableism and social participation.

We can build a more inclusive society that recognise the contributions and rights of all people, regardless of their ability, by tackling ableism and encouraging social involvement. To build a more inclusive and fairer Europe, individuals and organisations are actively combating ableism at the European level. This activism works towards dismantling barriers, changing attitudes, and promoting social participation for people with disabilities, ensuring that they can fully contribute to and benefit from European society.

Equal access to social and political participation: right to equal social and political participation.

While national organizations may vary depending on the country, in this methodology general information and examples of international organizations that work towards empowering young people with disabilities to become more active in their communities are presented. Youth workers could contact these or other organisations in their own countries that can contribute to people with disabilities becoming more active:

- **Disabled People's International (DPI):** DPI is a global organization that promotes the rights and well-being of people with disabilities. They have national member organizations in numerous countries, working to ensure the inclusion and active participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of society.
- **World ENABLED:** World ENABLED is an organization that works to advance the rights and opportunities of persons with disabilities worldwide. They focus on promoting inclusive policies and practices and offer programs aimed at empowering young people with disabilities to become leaders in their communities.
- **Inclusion International:** Inclusion International is a global federation of organizations that advocates for the rights of individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families. They work towards the full inclusion and active participation of people with intellectual disabilities in society, including in social and political spheres.
- **The Global Partnership for Children with Disabilities (GPCwd):** GPCwd is a network of organizations and individuals committed to promoting the rights and well-being of children and youth with disabilities. They work to enhance the social and political participation of young people with disabilities through advocacy, capacity-building, and knowledge sharing.
- The creation of a working group made up of differently-abled and able-bodied individuals from various European nations, which could meet every quarter or every two years to discuss issues that need to be changed, could be one activity that is developed. This group would then present its recommendations to the European Parliament in petitions calling for changes to specific laws for people with disabilities. In combination with this group, some humorous videos could be created to demonstrate the problems related to the petition to be presented.
- Social participation is related to the concept of social inclusion. The need for personal independence and the failure to create one's own choices are certainly among the foremost genuine angles that individuals with disabilities can encounter in their lives, a condition that is the result of various disadvantageous circumstances connected with each other in a negative way. In this setting, comprehensiveness plays a crucial role. Another issue that needs to be raised is that it is basic to alter attitudes. It does not matter if there are laws and buildings accessible if the general population doesn't regard them (blocking passages,

for illustration). It is important that there is awareness-raising among the general population which children are taught from an early age to get the circumstances and combat stereotyping and prejudice.

- A useful strategy is to have petitions for changes of certain laws for people with disabilities. Petitions can be powerful tools for advocating changes in laws and policies related to people with disabilities. Reaching out to organisations that support disability rights, advocacy groups, and other stakeholders can help accomplish this. After the creation and formalisation of the "council" of disabled people, the petition could begin with a gathering of signatures. Collaborating with established entities can lend credibility and increase the reach of the petition. They may also provide guidance, resources, and additional support. Additionally, humorous videos could be created to demonstrate the problems related to the petition. It would also be effective to create training videos, factsheets and others on EU and State members.
- The establishment of a working group with members from different European countries who are both disabled and not disabled could be an approach that positively impacts social engagement. Youth workers should exhort others to sign the petition and spread it widely, especially disabled persons, their families, friends, and allies. It emphasises the importance of their voices and the collective impact of their support. It is essential to also provide resources and materials for supporters to use when promoting the petition.
- Finding influential decision-makers who can modify the law or policy you wish is another tactic for promoting social inclusion. This could include local representatives, lawmakers, government officials, or relevant committees. Send them the petition and personalized letters, highlighting the reasons for the proposed changes and the public support behind them.

Conclusion

In this methodology some key strategies and activities are proposed. By incorporating these elements into education, we can foster a critical stance towards ableism, empower individuals to challenge societal norms, and work towards creating inclusive communities that value and celebrate the diversity of all individuals, regardless of their abilities. However, the methodology is not exhaustive and there are various activities and strategies that can also be used, depending on each country's level, infrastructure, resources, etc.

Annexes

Meetings Reports

International Working Group – 1st Meeting Report

Researcher / Facilitator: Diana Borges & Christina Michael

Date & Location: 28th April 2023 / Online Meeting

Presentation of the International Working Group and Individual Aims to Participate in this Project.

- **Catarina Oliveira (Portugal):** Work as a speaker in schools, universities, etc. to create more diverse backgrounds like recruitment of disabled people to raise awareness for this topic.

Aim: Learn from each other, especially with people with born disabilities and learn about their reality.

- **Sara Rocha (Portugal):** President of a Non-profit-organisation that supports people with autism and their familiars, work also with projects for mental health, helping autistic people in politics, speaks in the European Council for autistic people European Patients Forum, representing autistic people in the European Union

Aim: Because of being diagnosed late, she believes there is not enough self-advocacy for autistic people, and it's urgent to intervene.

- **Paula Gascueña (Spain):** Participates in volunteer groups like selling books, and work groups for autistic people in Valencia and giving them a voice.

- **Anais Romé (Spain):** Work with people that are homeless.

Aim: Sharing experience is important and help with disability in the social world and stop the misunderstanding of this topic

- **Lampros Drousiotis (Cyprus):** Help people with disabilities in Cyprus

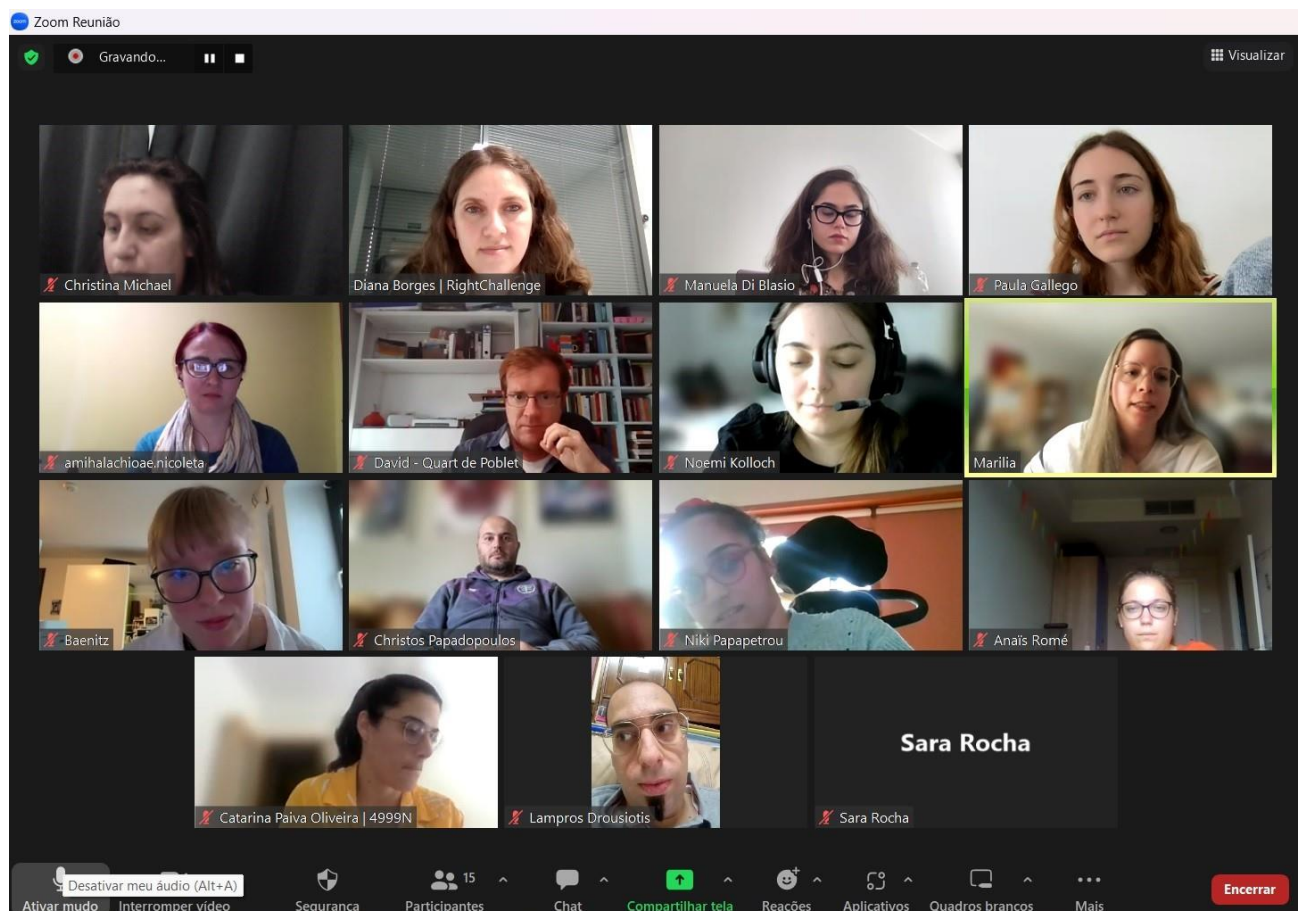
Aim: Show people their rights

- **Niki Papaetrou (Cyprus):** Vice-president of a non-profit organisation for people with Cerebral Paralysis and works with people with other disabilities.

Aim: Raise awareness of own disability and other disabilities, and helps them stand up for themselves and advocate for the voiceless

- **Lisa Baenitz (Germany):** Volunteered in a political association, gives workshops on inclusive education, and participates in a group for self-representation.
- **Aim:** Change the structure in Germany for people with disabilities like schools and segregation and Exchange thoughts with each other about their disabilities and rights.
- **Christos Papadopoulos (Greece):** Is so far not politically active but wants to and hopes to help in AAA Project.

The International Working Group:



Items for Discussion:

1. **Social Inclusion:** The need for personal independence and the failure to create one's own choices are certainly among the foremost genuine angles that individuals with disabilities can encounter in their lives, a condition that's the result of various disadvantageous circumstances connected with each other in a negative way. In this setting, comprehensiveness plays a crucial part. Within the social circle, to be included implies an overall to feel welcome: to have a place to gather individuals, to society, and to completely appreciate all the rights and openings that this having a place involves.

Instruction strengthens comprehensiveness. Undoubtedly, comprehensive instruction can anticipate segregation and mishandling and can ensure the foremost impeded individuals rise to openings for education and full interest in the life of their community. Another issue raised was that it is basic to alter attitudes. It doesn't matter if there are laws and buildings accessible if the general population doesn't regard them (blocking passages, for illustration). It is important that there's awareness-raising among the general population which children are taught from an early age to get the circumstances and combat stereotyping and prejudice.

- Catarina from Portugal shares that education is not inclusive (students with disabilities are apart from other students), people are ableists.
- Sara from Portugal it is hard to do political work for young people with disabilities, education legalisation is not implemented and has bad outcomes.
- Niki from Cyprus admits that is very complicated, on paper, everything is there but it is not implemented. Kids with disabilities are stuck in Special-Eds classes and have a small chance to get out of Special-Eds classes.
- Anais from Spain, says that regarding Spain, regarding support in education the school medic decides to help with school exams, it is very hard to get accepted with a disability like dyslexia or autism. Also in employment, the employer just sees the effectiveness and decides against people with disabilities.
- Lisa from Germany says that the education system is very problematic because it is based on the separation of people with disabilities from those without, which prevents us from choosing our own educational path. “

- Paula from Spain affirms that it is hard to get a disability recognized in university.
- Christos from Greece observes that education is lacking like in Cyprus and very complicated for higher education, the assistance of the government is not enough.

2. **Legislation in different countries:** At the governmental level, each nation has enactment to secure and guard the rights of in an unexpected way abled citizens. Frequently, in any case, at the neighbourhood level, organizations are still exceptionally in reverse and take a long time to execute controls. This makes the social incorporation of the different citizens who feel avoided and under-represented indeed more troublesome.

This speaks to an awfully risky unfair figure for citizens with incapacities who are as of now defenceless by nature. One issue that was highlighted was money-related back, such as bank credits or credits. Individuals with incapacities are regularly not considered qualified for this sort of back.

3. **Accessibility:** Accessibility is of essential significance and basic for dynamic interest within the existence of a society. Frequently, be that as it may, the cities where citizens live are blocked off, with various engineering obstructions that nearly avoid total versatility. The concept of boundary is exceptionally wide, extending from impediments such as the area of the domestic, put of work, and transport.

Hence, advancing openness implies accomplishing a world on an all-inclusive scale: a world in which everybody can move around unreservedly and freely, and break even with get to each opportunity and plausibility that the setting in which they live can offer. One figure that was pointed out was that at the slightest open administrations ought to have more prominent openness and more secure get-to, such as for individuals with visual impedances.

- Catarina from Portugal admits that the Main problem is still implementing laws for accessibility like public spaces.
- Sara from Portugal says that adaption for autistic people is not there, the accessibility is only shown in physical disabilities and not mental.
- Anais from Spain, but originally from France, admits that exists a difference between Spain and France. Spain is more accessible and has better inclusion like in public transportation.

- Lisa from Germany says that stereotypes are huge in Germany, public transport varies between cities and villages and influences the quality of life, there are laws but not all want to implement these.
4. **Healthcare and Social Security Grants:** The participants generally complained that the support they receive from the state in relation to their disabilities is not sufficient, and is often difficult to obtain, especially when the disability is not visible. The same is true for access to specialised medical support since unfortunately non-visible disabilities are not accepted and considered as such. At the same time, as people with disabilities grow older, monetary, and other support tends to decrease.
- Nikki from Cyprus shares that if you are employed or not disabled enough you don't get assistance.
 - Lampros from Cyprus shares that the spaces and the streets are not clean enough and it is hard to access the building or to be on a street alone.
 - Lisa from Germany says that there is a good healthcare system, but you do not always get the aid that helps people with disability in the right way, and you must show the level of disability, which does not always work out for everyone. Your financial independence from the state is determined by the amount of aid you receive.
 - Paula from Spain says that health professional doesn't always know how to interact with people with disabilities and it is hard to get an appointment with a doctor, invisible disabilities are also important and must be showcased.
 - Christos from Greece affirms that in theory, the law exists but the reality is different, not all cities are accessible, for example going to the sea or using public transport, there are no caregivers, so families must do it, the mentality is too self-centric, and it must change.

Key Outcomes of the Meeting:

1. **Invisible disabilities:** incapacities that are not recognizable 'visually' regularly conclusion up being disregarded or outflanked by those incapacities that are unmistakable to the exposed eye (e.g., physical disabilities, down disorder). It is additionally vital to provide due thought and

significance to those shapes of inability that are characterized as imperceptible and to deliver a voice to those who endure them, without making them feel underestimated.

2. **Self-acceptance as a different person:** Impaired individuals are frequently seen as diverse from able-bodied individuals. They are moreover casualties of segregation due to a significant obliviousness that particularly nowadays is unequivocally felt.
3. **Gender equality:** Frequently the sex distinction in inability speaks to a twofold segregation for crippled ladies. Being a lady with an inability can be cruel encountering separation, to begin with as an individual with incapacity and after that as a lady with an incapacity. It is subsequently significant to break down sex preferences, beginning from primary education for an instruction that's as comprehensive as conceivable.

Themes that the participants suggested to be worked on for the methodology to be developed.

Accessibility to all buildings, transports and streets, safe spaces for		Financial Issues regarding support of disable people
Awareness of all kinds of disability	European Disability Card	Inclusive Education
Support for people with disability, and how to deal with it. To know more about their own disability.		Promote the independence of people with disabilities
Sexuality of people with physical disabilities	Strategies to implement the laws	Rights of people with Disabilities (What Were, How)
Equal access to employment	Sexual harassment of disabled people	Disability and gender.
Support to access education	Mental health support for people with disabilities and fight the stigma	

International Working Group – LTTA Cyprus - Meeting Report

Researcher / Facilitator: Contribution of all Partners – Compiled by RightChallenge

Date & Location: 16th to 18th of May’23 – Nicosia, Cyprus

Key Outcomes of the Meeting:

On the **first day** of the training and sharing activity, after the welcoming by Synthesis, RightChallenge presented the objectives of the session and the intended result. There was a brief presentation of the participants and the organizations involved in the project and what are the specific needs of the target audience.

Through an ice breaker, the participants could get to know better the other participants and the reality lived by them in their respective countries.

In the second part of the morning, the report of the first online meeting was discussed and presented, as well as the strategies we would use and ideas for the development of the methodology. Some ideas and key points that were presented and discussed were the following:

Strategies to tackle the issues.

- Learning about the specific aspects of different-abled
- Creating testimonials, website etc.

Visibility

- How can we make the problems of different-abled people more visual?

Educating people

- How do we take the problems of different-abled people to schools?

Niki Papaetrou (Cyprus): Suggest discussing the topic with professionals like psychologists and medical doctors who relate to the target groups.

- Creating a network with professionals
- A very important target group is kids.
- What is important in terms of these issues?

Lisa Baenitz (Germany): Suggest Creating awareness through self-representation.

- Not talking about disabled people.
- Let disabled people talk.
- Maybe through little videos produced by the different-abled people themselves.

Catarina Oliveira (Portugal) shared her Instagram account with humorous videos about the problems of people in wheelchairs.

- Humor is an important strategy to raise awareness about the topic.
- The audience does not understand the topic as a burden (example: German YouTube channel: Gewitter im Kopf)

Participation strategy

- Social media channels should be extended by partner channels.

- This helps to overcome language barriers.
- Municipalities as a key institution for public engagement of different-abled people.
- Recommendation: every partner and different-abled people should check the opportunities for participation in their hometown. Are their departments which explicitly deal with the topic of disabled people? Which activities do they arrange for public engagement of different-abled people?

Violation and discrimination

- Topic should be discussed and evaluated.
- People who lose their human rights.
- Which law does protect different-abled people in this context?
- Support for different-abled people to make decisions.
- There is a high need to defend different-abled people against any kind of infringements and to support them after violent acts, maybe through stronger engagement and interactions between social workers and the court.

Karen (Ireland): Referred that there does exist an “Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act” on the European level: Paper: Neto, J.I.T.F. Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity): A New Legal System Where the Will of People with Disabilities Really Matters? The Portuguese Experience. *Int J Semiot Law* 36, 745–765 (2023).

- <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11196-022-09895-5>
- <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11196-022-09895-5>

In the afternoon of the first day, we discussed the main ideas covered in the morning and defined the main points:

Strategies to Promote Activism

1. Testimonials – Learning about different abilities.
2. Accessibility to the website for all – important that all disabilities are catered for (e.g. vocal impairment, etc.)
3. Don’t talk about disability – Talk about ability.
4. Education of Ableism – Start with children at a young age.

5. Presenting ourselves – Self-presentation. Important activists have their own voice – presentation/participation.
6. Produce a video – Create a YouTube channel.
7. Promote awareness through social media – Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc.
8. Political involvement – Direct channel with the European Parliament.
9. Each country is to have an Ambassador for Disability and to meet in Europe once a year.
10. European Parliament for People with Disability – Contact your MEP.
11. Directives – European Laws – Target politicians whom themselves have a disability.
12. Loss of human rights due to having a disability – A disability should not take away a person’s right to speak or be heard.
13. Decision-Making Capacity Act.

Group Activities

1. Applicability
2. Validity
3. Cost-Effectiveness
4. Usefulness
5. Education
6. Visibility
7. Political Participation

Content to be Included in Proposed Memorandum

1. Inclusion/Self-representation
2. Invisible disabilities
3. Reducing peer pressure – of not being different – a key point
4. Critical analysis of the representation of different abled people
5. Sustainable development goals
6. Re-defining disability to “disability.”
7. Common groups for all disabilities
8. Diversity is enrichment in society.
9. Gender equality in disability
10. Interdependence with other sustainable goals
11. Employability rights

12. Visibility of the disability on social media – how to get and then attain attention on social media.

During the morning of the **second day**, participants were invited to divide into groups with the aim of promoting active participation strategies.

There were 3 groups, identified according to the 3 major areas of interest that emerged in the first IWG and they are:

1. Education.
2. Social visibility.
3. Social participation.

The **first group**, consisting of the Irish, Italian and Lutz partners, identified that at the school level, differences between people with disabilities arise as young people grow up.

For example, in kindergarten or pre-school, boys and girls perceive no differences between them in terms of skin color, cultural differences and consequently differences between able-bodied and non-able-bodied people. There are no differences because children are naive and believe only in the beauty of play and being together.

Difficulties begin to show themselves when moving on to school from primary to high school.

In this school environment, children grow up almost suffocated by social pressure that 'forces' them to behave in a certain way to be included in a group and not to be excluded and isolated. Disabled young people therefore suffer acts of exclusion because they are perceived to be different from the rest.

With the social pressure young people are subjected to, it also turns out that young people must perform in certain ways to keep up with the times, so they cannot afford to assist their differently abled friends.

Therefore, the inclusion of differently abled persons should be an integral and compulsory part of the school curriculum, to educate children from the early school years onwards to be informed about what habilitation is, and how to integrate their differently abled friends, without creating differences that may hurt those with disabilities.

Statement: *“The peer pressure of not being different starts in school. This creates an environment of victimization of different-abled people. The awareness of this topic needs to be a compulsory part of the school curriculum.”*

Another focus on which the group concentrated was on the extent to which Agenda 2023 refers to the social inclusion of people with disabilities. What emerged, according to brief research, is that Goal 4 (Quality education) and Goal 10 (Reducing inequalities) consider the social inclusion of disabled and vulnerable people and aim to help them to be integrated into society both through the right level of education and through policies aimed at their integration into society.

The **second group**, composed of the Spanish and Greek partners and Niki from Synthesis, on the other hand, pointed out that these disabled people are often underrepresented. They would often like to witness their experiences but feel misunderstood and end up close in their niche. One solution could be the use of videos on social media to give voice to these types of problems and to raise awareness of the hardships these people experience daily. Related to this is also the desire of differently abled people to be able to show ordinary citizens that they are capable of living on their own and independently as it is often believed that disabled people are not able to do so against all odds.

It is also necessary for differently abled young people to be able to get more support from the state from an economic point of view, as the expenses to be borne are often higher than for a person without a disability so that they can enjoy a certain social welfare that should not be denied to anyone.

Another aspect touched upon is that of the games and the Olympics. In fact, in the Paralympics, young people with disabilities who participate are not paid and often do not enjoy the same visibility as in the 'normal' games and this cannot but be a source of discrimination.

Disability, therefore, should not be a problem for society.

The **third group** consisted of the online participants with the Portuguese girls, Lisa and Noemi from Germany and Lampros from Synthesis.

They focused more on the concept of participation strategy.

They came up with the idea of creating a working group of people with different types of disabilities who work closely with local authorities and policymakers with the aim of improving and implementing new laws to have more social and economic protection.

The working groups work in each partner country, in their own language, and then ideally meet annually with the other groups to discuss progress and other potential activities. These groups should also be supported by the EU and those working should also be paid for the social service they provide.

On **the third and last day** of the training, the partners summarized all the topics covered in the previous days and the key points to be considered when developing the methodology.

Right Challenge, IUS

They talked about how to implement the ideas they had in the morning. They schematized the methodology and they have put some steps to implement:

- We must consider legislation from each country. We must choose people from the Councils and create a mechanism to select the one who will represent disabled people. We do not want to be every time the same person.
- We need to develop the strategy that will be implemented by the Council. It is necessary to make a literature review, to get people's points of view, concerns, advocacy, and public consultation to get feedback. After this, we can process the information and present the results collected.
- Create an implementation plan. We must present Quarterly reports. This plan must have a list of steps to follow to get results. It is important to develop a strategy that allows as many people as possible to join.
- It is necessary to have a Monitoring system.

Connectus, Quart de Poblet

Most important things to include in the report:

Visibility

- To focus on the Paralympics so we can get visibility for the project and for disabled people.
- We must use our slogan in the project to gain visibility.
- Public figures can talk to increase awareness and participation.
- To have infographics to show the difference between the % of people with disabilities and the % of people in decision-making positions (politicians, government, etc.)
- To show the reality of a city for people with disabilities (ramps, loud spaces, elevators, lights, etc.)

- Make awareness about invisible disabilities. These disabilities sometimes are not recognized but that doesn't mean they don't exist.
- We need to start a petition for EU authorities to raise the disability pension from the EU States because the expenses are high for people with disabilities.

Education

- It is important to have a strategy to include kids.
- It is important that people with disabilities go to school and speak for children so they can normalize, and other kids might be represented.
- We must make awareness so people can realize the stigma and discrimination that people with disabilities suffer.

Participation

- Projects like AAA promote participation.
- It is important to have people with disabilities and people with no disabilities work together on projects like this.
- Participation and visibility are connected, and we must promote both.
- It is important that people with disabilities can participate in Parliament, government, etc., but how do we do this?
- To create a group of people from different States from the EU to go to Europe and present their complaints, demands, situation, etc.
- It is important to work with local governments because is the administration that is closer to the citizens.

Future in Perspective, Exeo Lab, Synthesis

- It is very important that the strategy should directly affect people who are involved.
- Social Media like Catarina are very important. Because humor is a great idea to erase barriers
- Reduce the pressure of "being different". We want to create a diverse society. We must rephrase disabilities and make them different abilities.
- We must integrate the business, employment, and labor regulations. It is something we must develop and include in our project.



This is how we ended the three days of training and exchange of experiences and ideas with the hope of achieving something and trying to change mentalities. We appreciated the richness of the group we have created, and we realized that together we can make a difference!

DIFABILITY “The ability it’s not dysfunctional but different.”

International Working Group – 3rd Meeting Report

Researcher / Facilitator: Diana Borges & Christina Michael

Date & Location: 16/06/2023 – Online Meeting

Items for Discussion:

1. Education
2. Social Visibility
3. Social Participation

Key Outcomes of the Meeting:

1. Education, it was suggested that we should develop an audiobook for children from kindergarten to primary school with accessible language and a kind of easy-to-read book to be simple and accessible to any person with any kind of disability.

The audiobook should have a game at the end where the kids could put into practice what they have learned from the book. The book should approach the topics of social inclusion, discrimination, and violence and deconstruct concepts and misconceptions regarding people with disabilities.

In the book the story should be about kids to kids, using them to create synergies between kids with disabilities and kids with no disabilities, showing through them that they can help each other and showing that they shouldn't make differences between them. Enhancing the innocence of children.

2. Social Visibility, it was suggested to find someone with a disability in a high-profile position, that could make an awareness-raising video to put in our social media and YouTube channel to create awareness for this issue. It was also suggested to investigate the countries that have Independent Living Movements and contact them to make a statement about their fight, aims and objectives. Because the chairman of this movement is also a person with disabilities.

We do not know if all partner countries have this movement, what was decided is that the countries that have this movement would make this contact, and the others would try at a European level. Finally, we also decided to create infographics with statistical data on the number of disabled people in Europe and in partner countries, and the types of disability and non-visible disabilities. In these infographics, we also discussed the possibility of focusing on issues of human rights violations of disabled people, such as the right to reproduction and not sterilization of disabled people, domestic violence and sexual abuse of disabled people and the concept of independent living.

3. **Social Participation**, this topic it was suggested the creation of a working group composed of disabled and non-disabled people from several European countries, who could meet quarterly or bi-annually and could discuss the issues that need to be changed, to be presented in the European Parliament petitions for changes of certain laws for people with disabilities. In combination with this group, some humorous videos could be created to demonstrate the problems related to the petition to be presented.

In summary:

Education

- Main topic/Theoretical Part - Social inclusion, discrimination, and violence and deconstruct concepts and misconceptions regarding people with disabilities.
- Strategy – the story should be about kids to kids, using them to create synergies between kids with disabilities and kids with no disabilities, showing through them that they can help each other and showing that they shouldn't make differences between them.
- Activity – An audiobook with a game for kids

Social Visibility

- Main topic/Theoretical Part – Awareness of all kinds of disabilities and problems that people with disabilities can have and raising awareness in the public.
- Strategy - find someone with a disability in a high-profile position and Independent Living Movements and contact them.
- Activity - videos to put in our social media and YouTube channel to create awareness, videos from the Independent Living Movements chairman with statements about their fight, aims and objectives and infographics with statistical data on the number of disabled people in Europe and in partner countries, types of disability and non-visible disabilities and also focusing on



issues of human rights violations of disabled people, such as the right to reproduction and not sterilization of disabled people, domestic violence and sexual abuse of disabled people and the concept of independent living

Social Participation

- Main topic/Theoretical Part - Fighting for rights and better conditions for people with disabilities at the European level.
- Strategy – the creation of a working group composed of disabled and non-disabled people from several European countries.
- Activity - petitions for changes of certain laws for people with disabilities and humorous videos could be created to demonstrate the problems related to the petition.